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TAGS: MARR ETTC PREL PARM RS SU

SUBJECT: USE OF RUSSIAN HELOS IN DARFUR RAISED WITH MFA

REF: A. STATE 80838

1B. MOSCOW 1026

1C. STATE 26466

Classified By: Deputy Chief of Mission Daniel A. Russell. Reasons 1.4 (B/D).

¶1. (S) SUMMARY: The DCM and other Embassy officers have raised new evidence of the reported use of Russian helicopters in Darfur with multiple MFA officials June 13-19.

MFA officials questioned the veracity of our information, but they agreed to look into US concerns, including end-use checks on military equipment previously transferred to Sudan.

The MFA acknowledged our previous demarches on Russian helicopter use in Darfur but did not yet have an official response to share with us. END SUMMARY.

¶2. (S) In a June 13 meeting with MFA North America Department Director Igor Neverov, the DCM raised Ref A concerns over the transfer of Russian military equipment to Sudan and new evidence of the use by Sudanese authorities of both the Mi-17ish HIP and Mi-24 attack helicopters in Darfur.

Noting the African Union report of the shooting down of a Mi-24 helicopter near Um Rai, the DCM stressed mounting evidence that Sudan was not adhering to Russian end-use restrictions. Neverov recognized the seriousness of the issue given UNSC sanctions, but agreed to look into US concerns.

¶3. (S) On June 15, MFA Deputy Director of the Middle East and North Africa Department Ambassador Aleksander Shein questioned the sourcing of our information, reiterated that strict restrictions had been negotiated with the Sudanese over the use of Russian military equipment, and maintained that Russia investigated all claims of sanctions violations that are brought before the 1591 Experts Committee. Shein noted that previous reports of Russian-made Kalashnikovs being used in Darfur (both by the Government of Sudan and Janjaweid forces) had proved false, since the markings did not match Russian production lines. Russia would not close its eyes to abuses, Shein maintained, but conceded that the GOR does not physically check on the status of its equipment in Sudan, but waits for information to be raised first in the UN sanctions committee. Claiming not to be aware of the reported shooting down of an Mi-24 in Um Rai, Shein questioned where were the civilian casualties that would correspond with the use of these attack helicopters. However, Shein undertook to follow-up.

¶4. (S) Sergey Petlyakov, Director of the Arms Technology and Transfer Policy Office in the MFA's Department for Disarmament and Security Affairs, insisted June 19 that Moscow had complied with all UNSC resolutions with respect to arms transfers to Sudan. Russia relied both on Sudanese government guarantees, as well as end-use checks, to ensure that lethal military equipment (LME) would not be used in sensitive areas like Darfur. He questioned the veracity of the US information and asked whether we could confirm that

Russia had supplied the Mi-24 helicopter reportedly downed in late April, noting that Sudan had acquired a variety of weapons systems, some unlicensed copies, from a number of countries. The Foreign Ministry had no information suggesting that any Russian-supplied helicopter had been lost in Darfur. Drawing from Ref A points, we asked Petlyakov to follow up on promised end-use checks of previously transferred LME, as well as to cease future LME transfers.

¶ 5. (S) Petlyakov replied that the Foreign Ministry had raised our previous concerns (Refs B and C) about Mi-171 helicopters within the Russian interagency community, including seeking verification that end-use checks would be undertaken; however, the Ministry had not yet received a response. He said he would circulate our current concerns about the reported use of an Mi-171sh helicopter in Darfur in April and follow up on reports that the Mi-24 downed was of Russian origin. Petlyakov made no commitment that Russia would cease further LME transfers to Sudan.

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